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SUBJECT: LEBANON: COUNCIL DEBATE ON UNSCR 1701 CONFIRMS
FAMILIAR DIVIDE

¶1. (SBU) Summary. During closed UNSC consultations on December 12, UN Special Coordinator for Lebanon Geir Pedersen reported that Lebanon's continuing political impasse had prevented further progress on the implementation of resolution 1701. He called for presidential elections to be held as soon as possible, fretting that "another red line" had been crossed with the assassination of LAF General el-Hajj earlier that day and arguing the interim arrangement is not sustainable. Pedersen welcomed the Council's emphasis on the "whole" 1701 resolution, agreeing the Council should not "pick and chose" among its obligations. He termed reported illegal arms transfers across the Syrian-Lebanese border a "serious" matter, but refrained from specifically calling on Syria or Iran to comply with their obligations under UNSCR 1701. He called on the new GOL to prioritize the re-launch of a political process to address the issue of disarmament. On Sheba'a, Pedersen said progress beyond the SYG's provisional territorial definition would require the sustained efforts of Lebanon, Syria, and Israel, and that the SYG intends to consult with all relevant parties on the way forward. DPKO A/SYG Edmund Mulet emphasized that UNIFIL had found no/no evidence of Hizballah re-armament south of the Litani river (UNIFIL's area of operations), despite general Israeli claims to the contrary. Pedersen clarified that the UN did not/not hold the same view of arms transfers north of the Litani river. Mulet reported no progress on resolving the issue of Ghajjar and decried continuing Israeli overflights of Lebanon. Both Mulet and Pedersen criticized Israel for its refusal to hand over detailed strike data on its use of cluster bombs in south Lebanon.

¶2. (SBU) Summary cont'd. During member state interventions, most delegations joined Amb Khalilzad in condemning the el-Hajj assassination and calling for elections to be held immediately. Russia said the right response to the assassination would be for Lebanese leaders to intensify efforts to find a "consensus" solution to the presidential election issue. Although European delegations joined Amb Khalilzad in expressing concern about illegal arms transfers into Lebanon and called on Syria and Iran to comply with their obligations under resolution 1701, Russia and South Africa disputed the veracity of these allegations, while other delegations just ignored the issue. All delegations except the U.S. specifically criticized Israel for its continuing overflights of Lebanese territory and its refusal to provide the SYG with detailed strike data on its use of cluster bombs in south Lebanon. Most delegations welcomed the provisional territorial definition of the Sheba'a Farms presented in the SYG's report and urged the Secretariat to continue to make progress on this issue. France and Italy urged the SYG to help the parties reach an agreement on the territorial definition of the area. Most delegations supported France's intention to seek a UNSC reaction to the SYG's report on UNSCR 1701. End Summary.

Secretariat: Political Impasse Threatens 1701

¶3. (SBU) Decrying the assassination of el-Hajj just after the eighth postponement of the presidential election, Pedersen said the prolonged absence of agreement on the presidential election is not sustainable, arguing the interim arrangement "threatens the very foundations of the Lebanese state" and has prevented further progress on implementation of UNSCR ¶1701. He said the fact that the LAF had been targeted was a troubling development that crossed "another red line" in Lebanon that had provoked fears of another civil war. He described the "reported violations" of the arms embargo across the Lebanese-Syrian border as a "serious matter." He praised GOL efforts to implement the LIBAT recommendations to improve border security, however. On Sheba'a, he said the provisional definition of the area represented an "important step forward," but maintained that further progress would require the "concerted and sustained efforts of the Lebanese, Syrian, and Israeli governments." The SYG "intends to consult with all relevant parties and UNSC members on next steps" and believes that "progress on this issue is essential" to UNSCR 1701 implementation. On the abducted Israeli soldiers, Pedersen said reiterated the resolution's call for the soldiers' immediate and unconditional release and noted that during facilitation, "solutions for most of the Lebanese cases have been found."

¶4. (SBU) In his briefing, Mulet reported that UNIFIL and/or the LAF had found old arms stockpiles in south Lebanon. But "to date," UNIFIL "had not found evidence of Hizballah rebuilding its weapons capability south of the Litani river." He said UNIFIL remains ready to investigate specific information to the contrary, but so far the IDF has only provided information of a "generic mature," and UNIFIL and/or

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the LAF have been unable to exploit this to find "concrete" evidence to back up the allegations. Mulet also discounted Hizballah claims that it had carried out maneuvers in south Lebanon on November 6th. He reported no/no progress on resolving the issue of Ghajjar and decried continuing Israeli overflights of Lebanese territory. Both Mulet and Pedersen criticized Israel for its refusal to provide strike data on its use of cluster bombs in south Lebanon. Noting that 26 civilians have been killed from unexploded ordnance since the war, Pedersen maintained that "Israel's non-responsiveness on this issue is a cause for deep concern." Turning to disarmament, Pedersen called on Lebanon's new government to "exert every effort to re-initiate a political process that eventually leads to the disarmament of all militias." He noted that Hizballah SYG has stated that discussion of Hizballah's weapons should take place "in the context of a dialogue that addresses the country's national defense strategy." Pedersen concluded his briefing by welcoming the Council's emphasis on implementation of the "whole" 1701 resolution, rejecting a "pick and choose" approach to the resolution's obligations.

U.S. Focus on Elections and Outside Interference

¶5. (SBU) Arguing that the assassination of el-Hajj was "aimed at undermining Lebanon's sovereignty," Amb Khalilzad said the attack underscored the need to hold presidential elections without delay. He urged those blocking the election to cease linking non-constitutional demands to the vote and expressed full confidence in the GOL in managing country until a new president takes office. Amb Khalilzad commended UNIFIL, in particular for the checkpoints and patrols it has established along the Litani river, and urged further progress in trilateral talks on the issues of Ghajjar, unexploded ordnance, and marking the Blue Line. He emphasized our deep concern about illegal arms transfers across the Syrian-Lebanese border and supported the SYG's call on Syria

and Iran to comply with the arms embargo.

¶16. (SBU) Amb Khalilzad welcomed initial progress on implementing the LIBAT recommendations and urged further steps. He insisted that all militias, including Hizballah, must disarm now, and he called for the release of the abducted Israeli soldiers. On Sheba'a, Amb Khalilzad commended the UN cartographer for presenting a provisional territorial definition of the area, but emphasized that a permanent solution to the issue remains contingent on Syrian-Lebanese border delineation. Lastly, recalling the successful conference at Annapolis a few weeks ago, Amb Khalilzad noted that the Council already has a roadmap to a long-term cease-fire and permanent solution between Israel and Lebanon -- resolution 1701 -- and urged all sides to recommit themselves to its full implementation.

Delegates Call for Election and Dialogue

¶17. (SBU) After condemning the assassination of General el-Hajj, most delegations agreed with Pedersen that the attack underscored the need to move forward with elections now as a means to ensure stability and security in Lebanon. France and the UK urged elections be held "now" and underscored that the political impasse should not hold up implementation of resolution 1701. Noting that the el-Hajj attack was carried out when Lebanese leaders were close to an agreement, Russia said the right response lies in the further "consolidation" of Lebanese politics and an election "by consensus." China did not explicitly call for consensus but expressed hope for a "comprehensive" solution to the political impasse as soon as possible.

Several Contest Illegal Arms Transfers

¶18. (SBU) Although France, the UK, Slovakia, and Peru joined Amb Khalilzad in expressing concern about illegal arms transfers into Lebanon and called on Syria and Iran to comply with their obligations under resolution 1701, other delegations either ignored the issue or disputed the veracity of the allegations. Russia argued that critical assessments of Syria and Iran "were not supported by facts," and that the UN "must only use information beyond doubt and fully verified." The Russian DPR emphasized that the UN had found "no specific evidence" of violations of the arms embargo in southern Lebanon. South Africa rejected "mere assertions" of arms transfers and chided the Secretariat for endorsing such claims. Qatar, Indonesia, Panama, and Italy did not mention the issue at all. China noted that the issues raised by the SYG in his report related to the arms embargo "deserve

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attention," and that the GOL should increase its border security capacity and increase its cooperation with the parties concerned in response.

Overflights and Cluster Bombs Draw Near-Universal Criticism

¶19. (SBU) All delegations except the U.S. specifically criticized Israel for its continuing overflights of Lebanese territory and its refusal to provide the SYG with detailed strike data on its use of cluster bombs in south Lebanon. Many delegations, including the UK, characterized overflights as a "breach of resolution 1701." France said the practice should end. Indonesia, Qatar, and South Africa argued the damage caused to the GOL and UNIFIL by overflights could not be overstated; the practice undermined the credibility of the resolution. They all called on the SC to call on Israel to end this practice. Similarly, Indonesia argued that Israel must be "forced" to provide cluster bomb data "as soon as possible."

¶10. (SBU) Most delegations welcomed the provisional territorial definition of the Sheba'a Farms presented in the SYG's report and urged the Secretariat to continue to make progress on this issue. France and Italy termed Sheba'a "crucial to a lasting political solution" and urged the SYG to help the parties reach an agreement on the territorial definition of the area. The UK similarly looked forward to a "process" that would capitalize on the area's territorial definition. Russia expressed hope for "further consideration" by the SYG on this issue and reminded members that Israel, which currently occupies Sheba'a, must be part of a settlement on the issue. Panama said the demarcation of the Sheba'a Farms is an important part of the regional peace process and argued the P-5 have a special responsibility to move this issue forward. Qatar and South Africa called on Israel to "stop its occupation" of Sheba'a to enable Syrian-Lebanese border delineation. Most delegations supported France's intention to seek a UNSC reaction to the SYG's report on UNSCR 1701.

Khalilzad